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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE YEAR AHEAD: AN AGENDA FOR EXCELLENCE

A Program for the Board of Regents of Higher Education

1987

Franklyn G. Jenifer, Chancellor

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## THE YEAR AHEAD: AN AGENDA FOR EXCELLENCE

Excellence is the condition of success in the modern world. Massachusetts is prosperous today not because its industries are the lowest cost producers, but because of the quality of the goods and services they produce: unique products based on advanced knowledge. The Commonwealth's system of public higher education must aspire to the same excellence if we are to afford our people full opportunity as individuals, as citizens, and as participants in the twenty-first century economy.

Excellence is within our grasp. As a newcomer to this state, I am deeply and constantly impressed by the strengths of its public colleges and universities. They are staffed and led by committed individuals; the state's commitment, as indicated by financial support for them, is firm and improving; their contribution to economic growth and social progress is undeniable. Some of our programs are not merely good, but among the best. Several campuses, and many programs, are poised to achieve national distinction.

My job, our job, is to encourage and support the drive for excellence -- to challenge our colleges and universities to excellence -- using all the resources of the Board of Regents. Our own planning, and campus plans, will define missions, set goals, and chart the course toward distinction. Statewide program reviews, and other indices of quality, will identify not only weaknesses but strengths -- opportunities to move beyond regional adequacy to national leadership. Before the Board, at this moment, are a capital plan to build the physical foundations of excellence in our system, an operating budget recommendation that enhances its ability to fulfill multiple missions, and campus strategic planning guidelines that will help set our goals and our course toward them. Together they affirm a statewide commitment to excellence in public higher education, and an obligation to respond immediately and positively to the opportunities created by campus initiative.



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A commitment to excellence in public higher education is also a commitment to access. Our fundamental mission is to serve the people; that mission is carried out in a variety of ways, each of which, within a comprehensive system, may be fulfilled with excellence. The goal is not access or excellence; it is not even access and excellence; it is access to excellence.

A commitment to excellence in public higher education is not a threat to the excellence of independent colleges and universities. This Board and I recognize that outstanding independent institutions are a vital asset for Massachusetts, and that they provide an important dimension of choice for students. But we will not accept that their excellence is somehow an excuse for mediocrity in the public system.

A commitment to excellence in public higher education is not simply a matter of money. Excellence is grounded in public regard. We need the financial support of the state, and we will use incremental increases in funding as levers to move the whole system forward. But more than material support, we need the respect of the people of Massachusetts. The public will not be persuaded of our worth if we do not value ourselves; if we hold ourselves to a standard of excellence, public esteem and support will surely follow. As former Chancellor Robert Tranquada noted in his recent valedictory, this is "the missing ingredient" in our system. One of my primary goals is to insist upon that expectation of excellence.

Finally, a commitment to excellence in public higher education is a commitment to sustained effort. Excellence is never easy to achieve, even from a base as solid as ours; and it is even more difficult to maintain. We will not complete the program outlined here in the year ahead, but I am confident that we can make a good beginning. My confidence is based on what has already been accomplished -- the outstanding programs on our campuses, and the planning, fiscal, and academic review procedures developed over the past five years by the Board of Regents.





The agenda set forth here proposes seven major initiatives:

- o reform of continuing education,
- o improvement of teacher education,
- o rethinking of our collective bargaining structure,
- o a coordinated systemwide Strategy for Excellence,
- o a long-range plan for financial aid,
- o an affirmative action program, and
- o a public awareness program.

This is an ambitious program, matching our high ambitions for the system; it is a promise to the citizens of the Commonwealth that we seek and expect nothing less than excellence in our institutions of public higher education. As I have said on many occasions, I firmly believe that we can make Massachusetts the national leader in public higher education, and that indeed we cannot afford to miss our opportunity.

### **The Future of Continuing Education**

Massachusetts is singular among the states in that it does not financially support many graduate programs, or evening, weekend, and summer courses. These courses and programs are conducted on a self-supporting basis through the Division of Continuing Education (DCE) on each campus, along with courses we would all recognize as falling within continuing education. In effect, programs critical to extending higher education opportunities are operated outside the administrative structure and academic oversight accorded state-supported programs, with insufficient funding, and by faculty teaching part-time or on "overload." In the last ten years, more than a hundred academic consultants, scholars and reviewers for accrediting associations have stated in unequivocal terms that quality education cannot be achieved if this practice is continued.

The present practice adversely affects both the accessibility of these programs and their quality. For the increasing proportion of our students who are working people, parents and





part-time students, a traditional academic schedule is not suitable. Yet we remain the only state that discriminates among students based on the time of day when they attend classes. Continuing Education students generally pay more for their education than students in state-supported programs, and often receive less.

For the graduate programs in our State Colleges, the issue of quality is particularly critical. For example, the Statewide Business Review recommends eliminating graduate programs in the State Colleges unless action is taken on this problem within three years. The draft of the Education Review suggests that no new graduate programs be initiated until the issue is resolved. Finally, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges has recently indicated that future accreditation may be in jeopardy unless positive action is taken.

It is important, however, that careful study, clear guidelines, and resolution of deleterious statutory constraints be achieved before the Board acts on this complex and potentially costly issue. Although reviews and reports stress the need for "state support," they make it clear that funding alone will not solve all the problems. The key points in addressing this issue are scheduling flexibility, reallocation incentives, and administrative reform. Legislation is necessary to remove the statutory prohibition of state support for evening, weekend, and summer courses. Contract language limiting the hours of assigned teaching may be a less serious difficulty. The major policy objection to state funding has been its possible effect on campus flexibility and autonomy: Subjecting all new programs to state fiscal restrictions could lessen responsiveness to public demand, while loss of campus-retained Continuing Education tuitions would eliminate a source of discretionary funds. The first issue will have to be examined and addressed, while the second appears to be declining in importance.



The Board of Regents has already resolved that the Chancellor should appoint an Advisory Task Force to review the future of Continuing Education. I propose that we form, for this purpose, a special commission of individuals from within and outside the system. Given a clear charge and adequate resources, and drawing on findings of statewide program reviews, the commission should be able to achieve substantial progress in the year ahead, building consensus where possible, making hard decisions where necessary, and identifying needed statutory changes.

Continuing Education is an important aspect of the missions of public colleges and universities, and its restructuring must be undertaken within that framework. Its reform also offers an opportunity to refine and strengthen the missions of segments and campuses in the system. Careful consideration should be given to which programs merit and need state funding. This could be achieved through across-the-board guidelines or a competitive process, with funding from a Regents' reserve automatically folded into the base. Because of the serious quality and resource issues surrounding graduate education, an external review panel might be used to assess programs for which support is requested.

The successful resolution of this issue is critical to the future of public higher education in Massachusetts because it will require both understanding and, ultimately, support from the community at large and from the executive and legislative branches of government. I suggest that the commission appointed to study the issue should be broadly representative of these various groups. If its deliberations are open to all who are concerned, and if its membership represents the constituencies who would be affected by reform, the commission will be able to build consensus on the steps that must be taken to resolve the future of continuing education.





## Improvement of Teacher Education

With the Statewide Review of Education, the Board of Regents will take a role of leadership in the national focus on teacher education as an issue of excellence in higher education. The Review, implemented in 1985, is now being completed. Its final report, including a specially commissioned manpower study, will be submitted to the Board of Regents in February 1987.

Like the national Holmes and Carnegie reports, initial drafts of the Regents' Review of Education Programs identify serious weaknesses in existing teacher preparation programs. Future teachers are underprepared both in their general education and in specific subject areas, particularly in fields such as science and mathematics. Their communication and analytical skills are often weak, and few are well prepared for the cultural diversity and changing conditions they will encounter in the classroom. Current certification structures do not adequately assess teachers' levels of preparation before or after their clinical practice. In addition, the reports indicate that there are few incentives to attract highly qualified individuals to the teaching profession, or to recognize, and thus retain, the best teachers.

The three reports propose similar measures to improve the quality of education in the elementary and secondary schools by striving for excellence in teacher education programs: strong academic curricula in expanded five year programs, competency testing at different levels in teacher preparation, and revised certification structures. In addition, the Board of Regents review strongly urges that graduate education in the state colleges be conducted on a state-supported basis.

In assessing the recommendations of the Education panel and in determining the steps we should take to improve teacher education, it is important that we work in concert with the Board of Education. The Advisory Committee that will be





established to assist us in this statewide review will include representatives from the Department, but it is also incumbent upon me to work closely with the Commissioner as we study the consultants' recommendations and prepare specific proposals to resolve problems identified in the report including, among others, issues of program priorities, curriculum, skills testing, graduation standards, faculty development and certification. Nothing demonstrates so well the close ties that must exist between our two boards as the future education of elementary and secondary school teachers. Ultimately, our quest for excellence rests upon the thoroughness and effectiveness with which we prepare our students for entry into colleges and universities.

Initiatives recommended by the statewide review will link with other Board activities which focus on the improvement of teaching and teacher preparation. The school/college collaborative programs encourage the continued outreach of the colleges into the schools for in-service and pre-service training. Full implementation of the Admissions Standards will result in a more qualified pool of college applicants, and assist high schools in strengthening their programs. The Christa McAuliffe Teacher Incentive Program will continue to encourage qualified students to consider the teaching profession. Close cooperation with the Department of Education will continue to be crucial to the success of these programs.

The professional training of primary and secondary school teachers is a traditional and basic responsibility of public higher education. In the next year this Board cannot transform the public schools of Massachusetts, or complete the rebuilding of Education programs in our own system. But I am confident that within five years we can achieve a visible improvement in the quality of teaching in both higher and primary/secondary education, and in the preparation of students entering our colleges and universities. The time to begin is now.



## The Collective Bargaining Process

The current system of collective bargaining has not served the best interests of public higher education. Under this bifurcated structure, the Regents' Office is directly responsible for negotiations with classified employees, while negotiation of faculty and professional staff contracts is delegated to the presidents and boards of trustees of the institutions. The Regents' role in classified negotiations, controversial at the outset, is now widely considered to be a success. Seven separate classified contracts have been melded into a single agreement that provides standardized benefits and working conditions for more than 3,000 employees throughout higher education. All of the classified negotiations have been concluded in timely fashion, with a minimum of animosity and little or no erosion in managerial prerogatives. In the process, a savings of more than \$150,000 has been achieved over the cost of using outside legal counsel.

Negotiations with faculty and professional staff, on the other hand, have been marked by rancor and political controversy. Unions have repeatedly challenged the authority of the designated institutional negotiators. There has been confusion about the respective roles of the institutional negotiators, the Regents' Office and the State Office of Employee Relations. Protracted bargaining has generated substantial costs for outside legal counsel. Most important, the dispersion of authority has blurred the overall policy goals of the Regents and encouraged the unions to seek political solutions to academic bargaining issues.

The rationale for the delegation of bargaining authority for faculty/professional staff contracts was based on both philosophical and pragmatic considerations. The Board of Regents was committed to broad decentralization; and its staff was initially too small to take direct responsibility for faculty/professional staff bargaining.





I believe that the philosophical commitment to decentralization is sound, and should not be abandoned by the Board of Regents. However, there is a growing realization that the Regents will be held accountable by the Governor, the Legislature, the unions, and the general public for the pace, progress, tenor and results of collective bargaining. It has not been, nor will it be possible for the Regents to eschew responsibility by simply citing the delegation of authority to the local campuses.

In the course of this fiscal year, we will undertake a comprehensive review of the way in which collective bargaining is conducted. We will then be in a position to consider the resources and organizational structures necessary for more effective faculty and professional staff negotiations in the future.

### **A Strategy for Excellence**

The special report, "Foundations for Excellence," which is now before the Board of Regents, is much more than a capital budget request or a facilities master plan. It does include a multi-year plan for capital investment, and it does propose necessary improvements in our capability for facilities design, construction, and management. What I want to stress here, however, is the important sense in which it is, in concert with planning, program review, and budgetary processes, a part of a broad systemwide strategy to achieve the excellence that is within our grasp. Each part of the program embodies and advances the central academic purposes of this Board and the campuses; together, they form a comprehensive effort to move more quickly toward levels of distinction that we have seen only as distant prospects.

The capital plan, developed in close collaboration with several executive agencies, bespeaks the breadth and depth of the Commonwealth's commitment to a first-class public higher education system, a commitment that ranges far beyond bricks



and mortar. This is not a collection of construction projects distributed to the various regions of the state, though regional needs are taken into account. It is not, despite its goal of enhancing institutional effectiveness, simply a plan to meet the needs of our 29 campuses. It is truly a statewide plan, a plan that reinforces the ability of the system as a whole to serve all the diverse needs of the people of Massachusetts; and it is above all a comprehensive plan, founded on academic principles, shaped by educational considerations, and structured to support goals of institutional excellence.

For the universities, we emphasize facilities that will support high-quality research and graduate programs. For the state colleges, our greatest concern is adapting fine but aging campuses to changing enrollments and program offerings. The community colleges' special mission of providing broad access will be advanced by the projects proposed for them.

We are all aware that the planning, design and construction of physical facilities has been a painfully slow process; but we know too that it is an essential part of building academic excellence. There are research programs in our system, already on the verge of distinction, that lack only adequate first-class laboratories to achieve it. Instructional programs are less effective than they could be in modern facilities -- on all our campuses we struggle to fit classes to lecture halls, and jury-rig computer laboratories in conventional classrooms. Institutions which offer high-quality, high-demand programs fail to reach all those who could benefit because they lack vital support facilities, or because they are less accessible than they might be. The "Foundations for Excellence" program is a unique opportunity for Massachusetts public higher education to turn the capital process to advantage, to use it together with our operating budget, long range planning, statewide program review and other evaluations in pursuit of excellence.

Outstanding physical facilities provide a foundation, a setting for excellent programs. The Regents' operating budget





priorities in recent years reflect a concerted effort to recognize and support institutional commitment to excellence, and we will make that purpose even clearer in the year ahead. We know what quality is, we know where it is, and we are prepared to back our commitment with funding. To do this, we will continue to work to make our budgetary practices more flexible, more responsive to opportunities for excellence. A significant portion of our funding increase each year should be in the form of Regents' reserves for specified programs -- the levers, as I have said, with which we will gradually move the system toward new educational goals. The Chancellor's Challenge Reserve requested for FY 1988 will provide funds in hand when we are ready to move, not two years later as was the case with the otherwise exemplary Engineering Reserve.

Statewide Program Review, one of the initiatives presented in Phase I of the Regents' Long Range Plan, has been an outstanding success in focusing attention on needs and opportunities within the disciplines we have surveyed. This effort will continue, and we will supplement it with additional indices of quality and effectiveness. Using these objective appraisals, we will frame recommendations for action, set policies and provide funding -- with the basic assumption that adequacy is our minimum standard, and that excellence is a realistic goal.

#### **A Long Range Student Financial Support Plan**

The Massachusetts State Scholarship appropriation has increased from \$19 million in FY'83 to \$75 million in FY'87. During a period of declining federal aid and rising college costs, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is clearly committed to maintaining access and promoting choice of higher educational opportunities for its people. We are one of a few states offering the full range of financial aid programs, including grants, employment and loans. However, this array of programs





still resembles an accretion of separate initiatives more than a rational structure designed to meet comprehensively the needs of students and families. We need a long range plan for student financial support.

The Scholarship Office currently administers sixteen different programs of financial assistance for Massachusetts residents, eight of them initiated during the recent period of rapid growth. They include, besides the General Scholarship Program, the Adult Learner, Commonwealth Scholar, Consortium, Dedicated Grant, Gilbert, Graduate, Herter, Honor Scholarship, Medical/Dental, MEEP, Nursing, Part-Time Student, Teacher Incentive, and War Orphans programs. In addition, the Regents maintain a variety of tuition waiver, institutional contract, and return service programs.

We will be, and should be, held accountable for ensuring that all Massachusetts residents are adequately served, and for avoiding waste and duplication among the programs. Fulfillment of that responsibility will require careful assessment and imaginative planning. Development of a long range plan for student financial support will build on a detailed review of the effectiveness and efficiency of our programs, and on the thorough overhaul of the methodology governing eligibility for General State Scholarships now underway, to set the course for a comprehensive state financing program.

Among the ideas to be considered within the context of the long range plan for state financial aid policy is a new student aid initiative recently proposed by Governor Dukakis. Although the Commonwealth has an array of aid programs to assist the talented or needy student, average middle-class students and their families are increasingly burdened by the rising cost of higher education. The Governor has asked me to chair a study of the feasibility of a state-supported tuition guarantee program to aid this large segment of the population. The program would afford families and friends the opportunity to "purchase" future tuition for young people at today's rate and to borrow money for higher education expenses during the



pre-college rather than the post-college years. A particular goal of the program would be to broaden educational choice in a state whose excellent independent institutions are financially inaccessible for many residents.

Board of Regents staff have proposed a complementary Aim For College program, beginning at the sixth grade level, to provide incentives for students to remain in school, graduate, and go on to college. Designed to respond to the alarming high-school dropout rate, and to the restricted horizons of too many of our young people, the program would offer motivational support and tuition saving opportunities to all students, including those unable to participate in the tuition guarantee program.

A five-year plan for student financial support policy will determine needs of students in Massachusetts, assess the efficacy of existing and proposed programs in addressing those needs, and lay out strategies to improve access and choice. The plan will be developed by a representative committee of financial aid and financing experts and representatives from the Administration and Legislature working with Student Affairs and Scholarship staff.

### **Comprehensive Affirmative Action**

The Massachusetts public higher education system has maintained a policy of equal opportunity through affirmative action to ensure nondiscrimination and ultimately eradicate the effects of both intentional and inadvertent discriminatory practices of the past. Despite significant progress, the lingering effects of those past practices and policies are still manifested in the underrepresentation of minorities and women within the faculty ranks and student enrollments.

I believe that an excellent faculty, beyond its teaching skills and scholarship, should represent the diversity of cultures and races that make up this state and nation. In





1985, the proportion of minority faculty in our system stood at 7.7% of the total faculty, an improvement from the 6.4% of 1979 but well below the 1983 nationwide statistic of 9.9% for public institutions. Moreover, the future availability of minority faculty is threatened by declining minority enrollment in graduate school. Nationally, minorities accounted for 10.2% of graduate school enrollments in 1980, and only 9.9% in 1984. In Massachusetts, the percentages of black and Hispanic graduate students had slipped from 2.3% to 2.2% and from 1.8% to 1.4%, respectively.

Women also continue to be underrepresented within faculty ranks, though trends in graduate enrollment are more favorable. Here Massachusetts statistics compare closely to national figures. Between 1979 and 1985 the female proportion of graduate enrollment in the Massachusetts public system increased from 35.6% to 46.7%. Female faculty representation rates, however, have risen much more slowly, from 28.4% in 1979 to 31.2% in 1985.

I believe that a successful affirmative action program depends on three factors: commitment to the process, viable candidates, and positions to fill. The Regents are committed to affirmative action, and must continue to press our colleges and universities to increase the representation of women and minorities among the faculties. Yet we will have great difficulty in reaching our goals now and in the future if there are shortages of well-qualified females and minorities in critical fields, or if the campuses lack positions and funds to hire them.

As one component of such a comprehensive program, I propose that the Regents implement a Commonwealth Fellowships Program for minorities and women in fields of study in which these groups are underrepresented. This program could support individuals with full fellowships (tuition plus stipend) to finish their graduate studies at public and independent universities in Massachusetts. In return, they would be obligated to teach within the public higher education system



for a specified period of time after completing their studies. A successful fellowship program would, in a relatively short period of time, increase the total pool of candidates for faculty positions in these critical fields, and substantially improve our ability to recruit minority and female candidates.

The second component of the program would be the creation of a special reserve for supporting faculty appointments for women and minorities. The reserve would provide funds for first-year salaries, and extra positions, to facilitate the appointment of pre-identified minority and woman faculty. Campuses would petition the Regents' Office for an award from the fund, and if eligible campuses would be awarded a salary subsidy (up to 75%) and a position as needed. Once a campus position becomes available in a subsequent year, the Regents-awarded position would revert to the reserve pool. Some of the key criteria for determining awards would include patterns of underrepresentation within the campus and discipline, campus commitment to reallocating salary and position beyond the first year, and demonstration of good faith efforts and results in affirmative action. The final operational guidelines for the fund will be developed in consultation with Regents' and campus personnel.

Increasing the number of faculty role models will help us serve minority and female students better, but we need to address some of their problems more directly. As the Regents' demographic study showed, minorities will continue to represent an increasing component of the 18-22 year old cohort. Most of these young people will be graduates of urban schools, disadvantaged both educationally and financially. Our commitment to equal higher education opportunity must extend beyond low tuition, financial aid, and access to sound instructional programs. We must provide them with both faculty members sensitive to their concerns and problems, and the specific support services they need as a result of their backgrounds.

The Commonwealth has undertaken several exciting new efforts to acquaint high school students with higher education





and professional careers through the Massachusetts Educational Opportunity, McNair, School/College Collaborative, and AHEC programs. We need to begin to think about pulling these small, disparate pieces together into a single high-profile program. Our responsibility to students actually enrolled in colleges and universities is surely no less, yet we have effectively no statewide program to address the high attrition rates among those students, minority or not, who come to us insufficiently prepared. The other large northeastern states have all developed centrally administered, locally operated comprehensive support programs to provide remediation and counseling for these students. I believe that the time has come for Massachusetts to consider the need for and feasibility of such a program.

#### **Promotion of Higher Education in Massachusetts**

Despite the strengths of our colleges and for all our commitment to access, there is no single publication providing full information about the Massachusetts higher education system. To promote student access and choice of higher education opportunities, and to strengthen one of the state's major "industries," the Board of Regents has a responsibility to distribute accurate, clear information on colleges, admissions processes, and financial aid.

I propose the development of a comprehensive publication to promote and provide information about Massachusetts higher education. The contents would include an introduction promoting higher education in Massachusetts; general admissions guidelines and application procedures for admissions and financial aid; a descriptive paragraph and pertinent data about each Massachusetts college and university; a quick reference chart of academic programs offered in Massachusetts; a quick reference chart of financial aid resources; and a college application processing timetable.





Development of an informational publication has long been urged by both public and independent colleges in the Commonwealth. By spearheading this important project the Board of Regents will fulfill the mandate of its enabling legislation to disseminate higher education information.

## Summary

The agenda I present here is not a group of separate projects, nor does it stand apart from the other activities of this Board. The various proposals for immediate action are each an aspect of a broader commitment to excellence, one that will be reflected and advanced in all of our planning, budgetary, and academic policies. The specific initiatives are important; but the underlying commitment is vital.

During the next five years we will be challenged, from within and without, to define and achieve appropriate goals of excellence. In responding to those challenges and to the opportunities that accompany them, the public colleges and universities of Massachusetts, and the Board of Regents, will determine by their own actions whether the campuses and system seize the national leadership that is within their grasp.

Fortuitously, we are entering the second cycle of systemwide planning under the Board of Regents. The Regents' Long Range Plan: Phase II and the campus plans will identify the changing educational needs of the Commonwealth and the existing and potential strengths of the system. They will lay out strategies for responding to those needs and building upon those strengths through institutional initiatives and the Regents' academic and budgetary processes.

A key emphasis of the new planning cycle will be refinement of the campus missions established five years ago to promote effective budgeting, and rationalize policy decisions relating to academic programs. Several of the initiatives described above are part of the task of mission refinement: capital



outlay, with regard to the commitment to research at our universities, among other issues; continuing education, with broad implications for the role of the community colleges in outreach efforts, and of the state colleges in graduate education; teacher education, with its special importance for the state colleges; collective bargaining, which must take account of diverse and changing institutional roles. A number of earlier initiatives, such as Program Review, Admissions Standards, and the Governor's Centers of Excellence program, likewise contribute to the evolution of public higher education's missions.

The Massachusetts public higher education system is poised for excellence today because of the hard work of many people. The final step to excellence also depends upon the continuing commitment of many: trustees and presidents and administrators; faculty, staff and students; the people of the Commonwealth and their representatives in government. The responsibility of the Board of Regents and its Chancellor is to set worthy goals for their effort.

